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SERMON

Preach'd, and a

CHARGE

Given at the

Triennial Visitation

OF THE

Diocese of *SALISBURY.*

By the Right Reverend Father in GOD,
Barnett
GILBERT, Lord Bishop of SARUM.

LONDON:

Printed for J. CHURCHILL, at the *Black Swan* in
Pater-Noster. MDCCXIV.

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ACTS xx. Ver. 32.

And now, Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

THESE Words are a Part of St. Paul's Farewel, and last Speech to those of *Ephesus* : He reckoned that they were to see his Face no more ; he foresaw by the Spirit of Prophecy, that after his Departure *grievous Wolves* were to break in upon them, breathing out Cruelty and Persecution, not *sparing the Flock* : This was accomplished first in the violent

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and furious Opposition that the *Judaifers*, chiefly the Zealots among them, did raise against the Doctrine preached by the Apostles, in particular, the delivering the *Gentiles* from the Obligation to the *Mosaical* Observances, but that was to be followed by a more dreadful and lasting Persecution, that was to come on them from the Heathens, who in a Succession of some Ages, and by many repeated Cruelties, studied to extinguish Christianity, sparing no Corner or Part of the Church.

With this he foresaw another more subtile and more dangerous Mischief that was to break out, when some *among themselves* should arise and *speake perverse Things, and draw Disciples after them*. This was sadly fulfilled in the corrupt Doctrines of those Hereticks, who distracted the Church, and both broached false and impious Tenets, and gave the Rise to many Schisms and Divisions that rent and tore the Body, which is and ought to be one, as it has but one Head. St. Paul apprehending or foreseeing those ill Consequences that were to follow soon after his leaving them, provides for their Security against these, and against all other Evils. He *commends them to God*, or as the Word is more strictly, He *presents* them to God, *deposits* them with him, and offers them to the Love and Mercies of him who governs all Things, and whose Providence watches over all those who put themselves under his Protection. But besides this Confidence he had in God, and in his Attributes, he more particularly committed them to the federal Blessings that were secured to them, by those
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Promises made them in the Gospel, which God of his Grace and Goodness had revealed to them. This would be sufficient to raise them up to be *holy Temples to God*, and to maintain that Spiritual Building against all the Opposition and Shocks that they should meet with, either from the open Enemies, or the secret Corrupters of this their most holy Faith: It would also secure to them an Admittance into the Possession of that Kingdom, of which by their second Birth they were made the *Heirs*. But that they might not deceive themselves with imaginary Hopes that would fail them, he gives the certain Character of all those who had a Right to look for a Share of that *Inheritance*; it was not the associating themselves to the Body of Christians, the professing the Doctrines, or observing the Rituals that were enjoined in this Religion, but their being truly *Sanctified*, their becoming *holy, as he who called them was holy, in all manner of Conversation*. This is the only Thing that gives a Title to that Inheritance. The Words being thus opened, they lead us to meditate more particularly on these *Five Things*.

- I. That when we apprehend, either the open Violence, or the secret Practices of the Enemies of our holy Faith, we ought to fly to, and depend on God, on his Attributes, and on his Assistance and Providence.
- II. We ought more particularly to trust to the Promises that Christ has given us in the Gospel.

III. That

III. That by these we shall be built up, and established as a holy Temple to God.

IV. That from these we may rest assured, we shall have a Share in the Glory that shall be revealed.

V. That our Title, both to Protection, Support, and Reward, arises from our being inwardly purified and sanctified, and not from outward Appearances or Privileges. To return.

I. When we apprehend either the open Violence, or the secret Practices of the Enemies of our Holy Faith, we ought to fly to, and depend on God, on his Attributes, and on his Assistance and Providence. If we call to Mind how many sad Instances we see in others, or feel in our selves, of the Feebleness of our Natures, how frail we perceive our selves to be; how soon we may be overcome, and how subject we are to be deceiv'd, we will soon be convinced, that we have no Reason to trust to our selves, or to rely on our own Strength. We have mighty Adversaries, strong and watchful, cunning as well as cruel, and in us there is no Strength. The Love of Life lies deep in our Nature: Poverty and Imprisonments are of a hard Digestion; languishing in Torture, and dreadful Burnings, are Things so contrary to our Natures, that unless we are raised above our selves, by a superiour Principle, that transforms and exalts us into a Participation of the *Divine Nature*, we shall certainly faint in Day of Tryal.

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There are *grievous Wolves* who are now howling about us, and seem to be in full hope that they shall have us quickly in their Power ; and then we may be well assured that they will *not spare the Flock*. Where they prevail, they have many Eyes ; for they have Spies every where : Looks, Words, and every Circumstance of Men, especially of suspected Men's Behaviour, are watched and reported with all invidious Aggravations : These are readily believed, especially where there is a Prospect of Wealth to be got by destroying the Owners. This is the Practice of those Wolves in *Popery*, where they have Strength enough to get every Thing put in the Power of a Court of Inquisition : And they reckon that their Work is never finished till that is established ; with these there is no Mercy, and from them there is no Redemption. We have been often as in the *Lions Mouth*, and as on the *Horns of the Unicorns*, how near we are now to it, God only knows. They boast in all Places beyond Sea, that we are quickly to fall into their Hands ; they do this with such bold Airs of Assurance, that they seem to have more than ordinary Grounds for such their Confidence. This certainly ought to tell us, That it is now *high Time for us to awake out of Sleep*, and to prepare us that we may resist *even unto Blood, striving against Sin*, and the Man of Sin.

It is the Character of an abject Mind to fear where no Fear is, but it is the Character of a Man drunk even to Madness, *to lie down in the midst of the Sea, or to lie upon the Top of a Mast* : God grant we may see our Danger in Time, and
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no be driven to that Apology and poor After-game of Fools, of saying, when all is utterly lost; Who could have thought it?

An open Persecution has indeed a dreadful Face, but perhaps what comes after it in *St. Paul's* Discourse is no less formidable, that some among themselves should rise up and speak *perverse Things*: This, as *St. Paul* spoke it, related to the Heresies and Schisms that were to rise in the Church, and that were to be managed with a *perverse Temper*, by Men who were apt to *lie in wait to deceive*: How great a Plague this has been to the Christian Church, all who know any thing of its History must be well acquainted with it. Some of these Errors have struck at the Foundation of the Faith, the most sacred Articles of our Faith: Others have corrupted the Worship of God with a Mixture of Heathenish Superstition and Idolatry: While to maintain all their Corruptions, an Authority has been usurped over both the Ecclesiastical and the Temporal Powers, and even over the Laws of God himself. To support all this, proper Baits have been thrown out to draw many after them.

The Libertines have a Relaxation of Morals, so they will take it from their Confessor, or buy it from the Pope: An outward Splendor and Pageantry with pompous Processions, serve to blind the unthinking Multitude; and incredible Swarms of Regulars every where, distinguished in their various Orders, take the Word from their *Generals*, and hand it about among their *Votaries*.

Thus we may in a large Sense understand what may be meant by *some among ourselves*; but I wish,

I heartily wish, they may not be too well applied in a stricter Sense to some *among our selves* who *speak perverse Things*, who like the *Donatists* of old, would confine Christianity it self to be within their own Pale ; as if none were to be reckoned baptized Christians, but those that are so in the regular Way. By this a great Part, even of *Popery* is cut off, among whom Baptism by Midwives is publickly authoris'd and commonly practis'd : This was derived from them, and conniv'd at among us for about half a Century. This cuts off at once all the foreign Protestants from being Christians ; besides, Multitudes among our selves, that were baptized a little above 50 Year ago. This will annul the Orders, and all Things done in Vertue of them, of many among us : And yet after all these Consequences, and in Contempt of the uninterrupted Sense of the Church in all Ages, a few only excepted, in the middle of the Third Century, this begins to be contended for with unusual Heat. The whole State of our Reformation, and the Progress of it under the Authority of our Princes, is openly arraigned, and a pretended Independency of the Church on the State is boldly claimed, contrary to what was from the beginning of our Reformation, till within these very few Years, the constant and unanimous Doctrine of our whole Church, without one single Exception to the contrary. The Sacrifice made in the Sacrament that is so earnestly contended for, is either only a Question about Words, or it is plain, that the Sacrament as Celebrated among us, is no Sacrifice : Since we have none of
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those Forms in our Liturgy, pretended to be necessary to the making it a Sacrifice. So if this is necessary to the Perfection of the Eucharist, we have been now above a hundred and fifty Years without a compleat Sacrament, under a Defect, which some think Essential to the Being of a Sacrament, and by Consequence of a Church. The Necessity of Confession and Absolution are pleaded for with much Heat, but I must add with very little Knowledge; for which as there is no Warrant in Scripture, nor in the first Ages of the Church, so when it had crept in by Degrees, all the Publick Discipline of the Church was overturned by it, and it is now the chief Engine of Tyranny, and the great Occasion of the Corruption of Morals in that Church that practices it. Thus we are going off from our established Doctrine and Worship, while those who sow these Tares among us, study to draw Disciples after them; they take to themselves the Name of the *CHURCH*, they raise Animosities, they make Parties, and have kindled a most unnatural War among us, which as it at present both divides and distracts us; so if it is not prevented by the good Providence of God, must end in utter Ruin and Destruction. What unkind Censures, and uncharitable Reflections, what false Insinuations, and black Calumnies, Men of this Spirit vent daily, is but too visible; and that not only against their Brethren, but against those whom they call *Fathers*, yet they treat them as Enemies, who may well apply the first Words of a Verse of *David's* on these Occasions, and I hope they make no worse use of it than he did,

did, who said, *For my Love they are my Adversaries*, Pſal. cix. v. 4.
but I give my ſelf unto Prayer.

When we have ſuch a Face of Things in View, what is to be done? Shall we go out in our own Strength, againſt both the Power and the Artifices of our Enemies? Shall we preſume on our own Abilities, the Firmneſs of our own Minds, or the Fixedneſs of our Reſolutions? We have but too many and too ſad Occaſions, to know how little we can depend on our ſelves. St. Paul here leads us to the *Rack that is higher than we are*, as to a *ſtrong Habitation to which we may always reſort*: He commends thoſe he ſpeaks to, to God, the Great and Mighty God, who does what he will in Heaven and Earth, and who cannot abandon thoſe that truſt to him. He ſees all Things, and is it poſſible to think that there is a God, and yet to think that he can look on and ſee any of his Creatures that call upon him, and that *walk in their Integrity* before him, engaged in Troubles and Difficulties, eſpecially if they come upon them for their adhering to their Duty to him, and yet not watch over them for good? Nor can we believe a Providence, and yet think that thoſe who have the beſt Claim to it, can be neglected or forſaken by it, when they are engaged in a hard Struggle for keeping a good Conſcience: It is impoſſible to believe the Attributes and the Providence of God, and not to reſt aſſured that he *will never leave nor forſake* thoſe who put their whole Truſt and Confidence in him, and do not deliberately run into any Thing, that may juſtly forfeit the Right they have to a Share, in a particular and diſtinguiſhing Care

and Direction : For if God has a general Care of his whole Creation, then certainly the best Parts of it, and that upon the most Critical Occasions, may expect a watchful Hand always ready to protect and assist them, either to dissipate their Fears, or to fortify them in the Hour of Tryal. This is that which we may rely on from the general Belief of the Attributes of God, and of his Providence ; therefore we ought to *trust in the Lord, and to be doing good* ; and thus *committing our Way* or Designs to him, we may rest assured *that he will bring it to pass.*

Psal. cxviii.
23.

Yet we are not to trust so entirely to Providence as to be remiss, expecting Miraculous Interpositions ; if at some times Things have fallen out so Critically, that all Men did say, *This is the Lord's doing*, yet we ought not to presume on the Return of such extraordinary Events : But we must see what is our Duty, either in the way of doing or of suffering, and that as well in our secret Intercessions at the Throne of Grace, as in our Publick Actings ; still keeping within our Sphere and Station. If we pursue this diligently, and call on all within our Reach, and under our Care, to the same Earnestness both in Private and Publick ; we may justly assure our selves, that either all those Clouds that do now gather and thicken, and seem ready to discharge themselves into Storms and Tempests, and into dreadful Convulsions, shall be quite dissipated ; and that a happy Calm shall quiet all our Fears ; or that God will so order every Thing that concerns us, that we shall be supported in bearing any Share that may be assigned us, and that
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we shall be so fortified in the *inner Man*, that we shall be in all Things *more than Conquerors*: Let us not therefore vainly trust to the Strength of our Minds, to the Degrees of our Knowledge, to the present Heat we may feel in our Tempers, or to the Zeal with which they may boil; all these may fail us in an Hour of Tryal: That which we ought to rely on, is when in an humble Mistrust of ourselves, we study to *work out our Salvation with fear and trembling*: Even while we stand, taking heed lest we fall, casting all our Care and Burden upon God.

II. I go next to the *Second Head*, which is this, that though the general Belief of the Attributes and Providence of God, is a just Ground of an assured Confidence, on which we may safely rely, and to which we may commit ourselves, as well as commend others; yet we Christians have a more explicit and authentical Assurance given us in the Gospel; on which we may most certainly depend: *The Grace of God that brings Salvation hath appeared*: Titus ii. 2.

This Grace and Favour was declared by the Son of God, who was in all things like unto us, Sin only excepted: He, by his Death hath made Atonement for our Sins, and hath reconciled us to God; he has established a New Covenant upon *better Promises*; and is now our Mediator and Intercessor with his Father, for obtaining to us all those Aids that are necessary for us: He has promised more particularly, that our Prayers shall be heard, and that he will *do for us whatsoever we shall ask the Father in his Name*: that he will *send out his Spirit to dwell in us, and to abide with us, to guide us and to comfort us*: John xiv. 13, 16, 26, 27.

us: He hath left *his Peace* or Reconciliation to us, upon which he tells us all, in the Persons of his Disciples, *let not your heart be troubled, neither be ye afraid*: He bids us *ask what we will*, provided we abide in him and it shall be done unto us. He has assured

Joh. xvi. 27,
33.

us, that the *Father himself loveth us if we love the Son, and believe that he came out from God*. These Things he said to his Disciples, concluding he had said all this, that in him we *might have Peace; in the World we shall have Tribulation*, but he encourages us with this, *that he had overcome the World*. And in his last Prayer to his Father, after that he had made all these Promises, he prays his *Holy Father* that he would keep through his own Name, or Authority, those whom he had given him, that they might be one, as the Father and he were one; not that he would take them out of the World, but that he would keep them from the Evil, and sanctify them by his Truth, for his Word was Truth. This Word, or these Promises are true, made by him who was true, and we are in him who was the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Joh. xvii. 11,
25, 17.

Isa. lv. 3.

Why do we call our selves Christians, if we do not believe those Promises that Christ made in so solemn a manner, when he was upon the Point of leaving his Disciples, and of Sealing all that he had thus promised with his Blood? The *Blood of the Everlasting Covenant that is perfect, well ordered in all Things and sure*. This is the Word of God's Grace, of his Favour to Mankind, to which St. Paul commends those he speaks to. If we set a true Value on the Words of the Son of God, and consider them as the Foundations of our Faith and hope, we will

read

read them frequently, we will lay them up in our Hearts, and meditate much on them. It is on these Promises that we have a Right to trust to God, to call on him, and always to depend on this, that our Prayers are heard, and shall in due time be answer'd : We are not at all times to expect that the particular Petitions we offer up shall be granted : When St. *James* and St. *Peter* were both imprisoned, no doubt the Churches prayed for both ; but St. *Peter* was delivered, while St. *James* received his Crown. God was glorified in both ; so we must not reckon that the particulars for which we pray, should be always granted in our Way. God knows best how he is to be glorified, whether in the Services or in the Sufferings of his Saints : And in this his own Glory, and the Good of his Church, in which it is impossible for him to be mistaken, will be taken care of in the properest Methods and at the fittest time. If then we believe that the Son of God proved his Mission from the Father, by the many undeniable Miracles that were wrought by him, and above all by his Resurrection, his Ascension, and the Sending of the Holy Ghost ; and if we believe that it is impossible for God, or for one that speaks in his Name to lie : We must believe that all the Promises that he made shall be most certainly performed.

It is the common Practice of Deceivers to throw out such Promises as may draw many Followers about them : But we cannot without the utmost Folly, as well as Impiety, suspect in this Case any Thing of that Nature. Christ told his Disciples that they must *take up their Cross*, and be ready to
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lose their Lives for his Sake, so here was no Practice on their Hopes : This on the contrary was the readiest Way to discourage and frighten them. This has also been the Portion of his Followers on many Occasions ; but at the same time that they were made Partakers of his Sufferings, his Spirit called the *Spirit of Glory did rest on them*, in so eminent a manner, that instead of being terrified with so dismal a Prospect, they rejoiced and gloried in this, *That they were thought worthy to suffer for his Name* : And in all their Sufferings they were *more than Conquerors*, for as the *Sufferings of Christ abounded in them*, so *their Consolation did also abound by Christ*. It is therefore to him that we ought to commit all our Anxieties about those Truths which he revealed to the World, for in the preserving of these his Glory is immediately concerned. He knows whether the true Interest and best State of Religion is most advanced, by outward Prosperity, and the Protection of Law, by our living in Ease and Plenty, in a Fulness of Bread, and of the Secular Advantages that do now abound with us ; or whether the true Ends of Religion will not be better advanced, as they were in the first Ages of Christianity, while the Gospel was under the Cross, while Bishops were the first exposed to be Sacrifices to the Fury of their Persecutors, and the Christians were forced to *wander in Deserts and Mountains, and in Dens and Caves of the Earth*. It appeared then as it had done of old, that they were the Men of *whom the World was not worthy*. The Truth of it is, our Religion is so sunk from what it was, and what it still ought to be, that we seem

1 Pet. iv. 14.

2 Cor. i. 5.

Heb. xi. 28.

to have little more than the outward Form of it left :
 So that tho' we have a Name that we *live*, we are
 for the much greater Part really *dead*. He who
 purchased the Church with his own Blood, knows
 best what are the most proper Methods to defend
 and improve it; to raise again the Spirit of true
 Religion, that is under such visible Decays, that
 scarce any Thing remains but a Mask and Shew,
 and that is so ill put on, that it cannot in any Sort
 disguise those, who live in open and avowed Im-
 moralities of the worst Sort. In many others, all
 the Life or Heat that appears in them, is in their
 bitter Zeal, in censorious Detraction, and in all
 the Excesses of Faction and Uncharitableness.
 While we are in so bad a State, insensible to all
 the ordinary Methods of Providence, neither
 wrought on by Blessings and Deliverances, nor
 awakened by threatening Appearances, going on
 in our Irreligion and Impieties, who knows but
 the Sentence shall be, *cut it down why cumbereth it* Luke xiii. 7.
the Ground any longer? I will come and remove the Rev. ii. 5.
Candlestick out of its Place, or whither he will cast
us into great Tribulation, and kill our Children with v. 22. 23.
Death: So that all the Churches shall know, that he
searches the Reins and Hearts, and will render to every
Man according to his Works. Or if he will in Mer-
cy to us, make those of the Synagogue of Satan, Rev. iii. 9, 10.
who say they are the only true Christians, but are not
and do lie, to come and worship before our Feet, so
that it shall appear that he has loved us, and that
he will keep us from the Hour of Temptation, which
is to come on so many Parts of the World to try them
that dwell on the Earth.

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Rev. iii. 8.

Which of all these is to be our Sentence, can only be known to God ; the first is the dreadfullest, as the last is the happiest of all : May we be delivered from the one, and if it be his holy Will, have a Share in the other. For we may humbly hope, that tho' we have but *a little Strength*, take it either inwardly or outwardly, yet since we have *kept his Word and have not denied his Name*, but maintain and outwardly profess the true Religion, that therefore God will through the Intercession of Christ, preserve us from falling under the Power of those Corrupters of his holy Religion, and the Persecutors of those who adhere to it.

1 Cor. iii. 12.

III. To go on to my *next* Head, this *Word*, that is, this Gospel is able to *build us up*. This is said in pursuance of a Simily taken from the Temple of *Jerusalem*, and applied by St. Paul to the Church in a noble Allegory, in which a Church is set forth as laid on the *Foundation of Jesus Christ*, the true Rock on whom only it is built ; but by several Builders, and in different Manners, some rearing up a Temple of *Gold and Silver and precious Stones*, not Gems, for that were an absurd Figure, but Stones of Value, of Marble, large and well polished, like the Temple at *Jerusalem*, in which the Holy Place, and the holiest of all was covered within with Gold : By this is signified the raising a noble Superstructure, upon the Belief and Principles of Christianity, of a pure Worship, excellent Morals, and a well compacted, and duly regulated Government : Such a *Church* so raised up cannot suffer much by the Fire of Persecution. It has a Firmness in it self, and a resisting Force, not easily mastered.

mastered even by such Burnings; whereas a Church built indeed upon the same Foundation, but raised up, as those are which we call Paper-buildings, of Wood and Hay, and of Stubble cemented together, that is of superstitious Practices, doubtful Opinions, with other weak Performances, feebly managed with little Order and less Union; all this will be soon burnt down: These Things have no Strength to resist the Fire, no Force to keep themselves united; so that Edifice and all those Things such Builders are concerned about, shall give them no Comfort in the evil Day: They will find no Pleasure in reflecting on all that Earnestness, with which they were advancing those inconsiderable Matters. It will minister no Joy nor Allay of Trouble to them, when they remember how eagerly they pursued them. There is yet still this Comfort, that the sincere but mislead Christians, tho' they will see all their Works in which they were so much engaged fall to nothing; yet since they have adhered to the Foundation, the Essentials of Christianity, they themselves shall be saved, even when they see how trifling all those Things were on which they bestowed their Zeal. On the other Hand, in the Time of Persecution, those who have been rearing up a solid and lasting Building, will find the Comfort of all their Labours flowing in plentifully on them: Whereas those who have been labouring about Things of little or no Consequence, will have but melancholy Reflections on all that in which they have so much busied themselves.

If we consider the Gospel, as it is indeed the Power of God unto Salvation, and follow the Rules

laid down in it, we shall be built up by it, all being softly framed together, so that we shall grow up to be a holy Temple to the Lord, and a Habitation to God thro' the Spirit. We may consider this in a double View, either as it relates to the inward State of Things in the Church, or with Relation to it's external Strength and Security.

Ephes. ii. 21,
22.

As long as the Converts to Christianity kept themselves on the Foundations laid by the Apostles and Prophets, adhering firmly to the Scriptures, as the only Rule of their Faith, so long as they retained their first Strength, as well as their first Purity: And that we find Copiously set forth in the first Writers, who on all Occasions appealed only to the Scriptures. If at any time they speak of Tradition, it is plain they meant of no other Tradition, than that which the Apostles had so lately delivered: *Irenaeus*, cited oft to support the more modern Notion of Tradition, tho' at all this Distance from the Days of the Apostles, knew *Policarp* a Disciple of St. *John's*, ordained by him Bishop of *Smyrna*. And to the same Purpose *Tertullian* speaks of the Original of the Churches, down from the Days of the Apostles: But all Questions raised in the Church, were then examined and determined only by the Scriptures. It is true, *Alexandria* being a Seat of Learning, some there began to intermix the Notions that they found in the *Greek Philosophers*, with the Doctrines of Christianity; and here *vain Philosophy* came to have a fatal Progress, to the great Distraction of the Church. Many departed from the Simplicity of the Scriptures, borrowing Light from darkened Writers, by which a real Darkeness, though under the

the Pretence of illustrating Matters, was brought into the Church. Then the Authority of Men came to be too much magnified, and insensibly in a long Succession of some dark Ages, Notions, Traditions, and human Authorities, came to be considered as equal to the only Divine Authority of the Scriptures : And then Matters were so involved, that it is hard to tell, whether the false Subtilties of the Subjects treated of, or the Barbarities of Stile in which they are set forth are the most distastful. The Scriptures were considered as Allegorical Writings, and Rituals were invented full of Mystery, Legends were forged in so gross a manner, as very much to expose the Ages in which such Things could pass, even on the lowest of Mankind. Thus was Christianity disfigured, and represented as hideous and monstrous.

God be thanked, the *Reformation* came at last to restore Christianity to what it was at first : To make the Scriptures the Text of our Faith, and the Apostles the only Persons, who by an Authority derived from Christ, delivered this Doctrine to the World : By applying our selves to the Study of this sacred Book, we can only be *built up in our holy Faith*. The considering it in its Original Language, the observing the Phrasiology of it, comparing all the Parts of it together, the reading it frequently, and the carrying great Parcels of it in our Memory is that which will make us who are Pastors, to be *able Ministers of the new Testament*, 2 Cor. iii. 6. *thoroughly furnished unto all good Works* : as the instructing you from your Childhood to know the *Holy* 2 Tim. iii. 15, *Scriptures*, will make you *wise unto Salvation*, they 16. *being all given by Divine Inspiration, and all are profitable*

table for Doctrine, Reproof, Correction and Instruction in Righteousness. The Neglect of this Study is that, to which the great Decay of Religion among us is chiefly owing. There is an Unction as well as an Authority in those holy Writings which carries an Efficacy with it, and leaves an Impression on those who come duly prepared to read them, both in Points of Doctrine and Matters of Practice.

The wonderful Application of the *Jews* to understand and remember the darkeſt Part of our Bible, ſhould make us *Chriſtians* aſhamed to be ſo careleſs about thoſe Parts of it that are much ſhorter, as well as much clearer. The Reformation did riſe among us with the reading of the Goſpel, from whence our firſt Reformers were called Goſpellers, as it is ſinking by the Neglect of it, even among the Men of Study, too many leaving thoſe pure Streams to ſearch into muddy ones. The Recovery of this Study, and the following it carefully both in Principle and Practice, is that which muſt *build us up*, as bring the *new Jeruſalem down from Heaven*, and in Concluſion it will carry us up thither again.

But as this is that which muſt build us up, as to the Inwards and Eſſentials of our Religion, either as we are ſingle Individuals, or as we are a Body united in the Belief of it; ſo this is that from which we may expect the external Security of it.

It pleaſed God as he made the Author of it perfect thro' Sufferings, ſo to make his Apoſtles in that to be Followers of him, who were every where *perſecuted, afflicted, and tormented*: But they had ſuch a ſuperiour Meaſure of Strength, as even to take *Pleaſure in Perſecutions and Diſtreſſes*. It is true, in regard to the Weakneſs of the firſt Converts, they had ma-

ny Intervals of Quiet, so that the number of the Disciples multiplies greatly in *Jerusalem*, and a great Company of the Priests were obedient to the Faith. *St. Stephen* was indeed stoned, and *St. James* was killed by the Sword, but upon that the Gospel was received with great Joy in *Samaria*; and upon *St. Paul's* Conversion, the Churches had Rest thro' all *Judea, Galilee* and *Samaria*. For a whole Year they assembled themselves without Disturbance in *Antioch*: The Jews indeed, being all alarmed at the Progress that this Doctrine made, stirred up a Persecution against it every where, wheresoever they had any Influence, in which they persisted, till they had filled up the Measure of their Iniquities, so that at last the Wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost: With that the Christians were delivered from their fiercest Enemies. It was an Honour to this Religion, that the two worst of Men as well as of Princes, *Nero* and *Domitian*, were their first Persecutors among the *Roman* Emperors, Christians passed for a Sect of the *Jews*. And *Trajan's* Wars with the *Jews*, were probably the Cause of that Persecution in his Time, that gave Occasion to that noble Testimony that *Pliny* gives of the Christians, who were in the Provinces that were in his *Proconsulate*.

Acts vi. 7.

Acts viii. 25.

Acts ix. 31.

Acts xi. 26.

After that, they had a long Peace for above a hundred Years: In which time this Religion was not only received, but settled and brought into Form and Order, thro' the greatest Part of the *Roman* Empire: but this long Peace had its bad as well as its good Effects. Heresies and Schisms distracted the Churches, their Discipline was slackned, and they lost more in the Corruption of their Morals, than they had gained in their Settlement: So it pleased

pleased God to visit them severely, in a Course of several Prosecutions that came pretty quick one after another, till after the last, the most violent and of the longest Continuance, God raised up a nursing Father to his Church, in the Person of *Constantine*: under whom, after all that has been said of him, it may be justly doubted, whether the Christian Religion gained more by the Protection and Encouragement that he gave it, than ~~at last~~ in the real and internal Power, by which it had shined out beautifully to the World during all the former Prosecutions.

Soon after this, a secular, a contentious, and a superstitious Spirit made a great Progress, and gives a melancholy View of the following Ages: As we find it much lamented by the best Men in them. Things run in this Declination about a hundred Years, and then God arose and scourged his Church severely, by the Incursions of the barbarous Nations, who ruined the *Roman* Empire and made Havock of every Thing: So that both Religion and Learning suffered extreamly in a Course of almost two Centuries; and then in the 7th Century, *Mahomet* came with an amazing Torrent of Success, that like a Deluge overflow'd all the *Eastern* Churches. Religion then sunk universally likewise in the *Western* Parts.

But upon the Ruins of Religion and Learning, the *Papacy* grew up to such a monstrous Height, that every thing which stood in its way fell before it. Courts of *Inquisition*, with Inventions of Cruelty, never thought on before, seem'd to be a sure Guard: But when their Corruptions grew to be so gross, and their

their Tyranny so intolerable, that they could be no longer born; it pleased God to raise up Instruments, who were in themselves no way proportioned to the great Work done by them: By their Means the Reformation was received in most Parts of *Europe, Italy* and *Spain* not excepted; tho' the Inquisitors did soon root it out in those Parts. Unheard-of Severities were every where set on Foot against them, by the unwearied Management of the *Popes*, and the loud Clamours of a Persecuting Clergy; yet where it was so severely persecuted, that as it is reckoned even by *Grotius*, a Writer not given to aggravate Matters, not under an hundred thousand suffered under these grievous Wolves in the *Seventeen Provinces*; at last their Persecutors became so outrageous and illegal, and the Numbers of the Reformed did so encrease, both in those Provinces and in *France*, that a happy Turn succeeded after all those Storms.

We here in *England* felt a Share of what others suffered, both much longer and in a greater Extremity. A King vain of his Learning, and impatient in his Temper, seemed resolved to extirpate that which he called *Heresy*. But God in the Secrets of his Providence, did so divert him into a Quarrel with the *Pope*, that the Persecution was by that Means stop'd: It is true, it broke out terribly in that bloody, but short and despised Reign of Queen *Mary*, whose Days were shortened, as we may believe, *for the Elects Sake*. That glorious *QUEEN* that succeeded, settled Matters of Religion at Home, and supported them Abroad so Powerfully, that in many Places the Reformation

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mation had a full Settlement : But what has followed upon it?

Now in a Course of above an 150 Years time, the Plenty we have enjoyed, and the Protection we have lived under, has brought us to such a dead Stupidity, that the true Sense of Religion is almost extinguished, and the great Effects of it, either in a holy Life, or in universal Charity, do appear in so few Instances, that Impiety and Infidelity have made a vast Progress. The heavy Strokes that have come upon many Branches of the Reformation have not awakened the rest, no more than the Captivity of the Ten Tribes awakened those of *Judah* and *Benjamin*.

We were indeed very near great Troubles six and twenty Years ago : But we only saw them coming on us ; we were threatened with the utmost Dangers, but we did not feel them enough to be sensible of them, and to remember them long. The Snare was so soon broken, and we escaped so easily, that it is almost worn out of our Thoughts : Since that Time we have been engaged in a long Tract of War, but though we have been often near very great Dangers, yet they all went over our Heads in such a manner, that few then made just Reflections on them, and fewer do seem now to remember them. We have enjoyed great Plenty at Home, and have had the most glorious Successes Abroad that are in History ; but how ingratelully we have behaved our selves, both towards God and Man, is but too visible. *Over all our Glory there has been a Defence*, but how long that shall be continued about us, is justly very doubtful. Who knows but

Isaiah iv. 5.

the Impiety, the Immorality, the Insensibility as to the Matters of Religion, under which we seem to be stupified and hardened beyond the reach of all ordinary Methods, may provoke God to remove the Secular Advantages and Protection that we enjoy, and visit us with a *Famine of the hearing of the Word of the Lord*, and let loose upon us such Judgments as destroyed the *Jewish Nation* of old, the *Roman Empire* some Ages after that, and so many of the Reformed Churches in our own Days.

There is a dreadful Denunciation in *Ezekiel*; somewhat like it, is that we may justly apprehend, *As for the Beauty of his Ornaments he set it in Majesty* Ezek. vii. 20, 21, 22. (this relates to the Magnificence of their Temple and the Service in it, to which the Beauty and Decency of our Worship may be well compared) *But they made the Images of their Abominations and of their detestable Things therein, therefore have I set it far from them: And I will give it unto the hands of Strangers for a Prey, and to the Wicked of the Earth for a Spoil, and they shall pollute it: My Face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret Place (the Holy of Holies) for the Robbers shall enter into it and defile it:* When such Calamities come to have their due Effect on us, then we may hope that *the time to favour us, even the set time shall come,* and that God will appear in his Glory to build us up.

IV. I proceed now to the 4th Head, which is, That tho' the Secrets of God's Providence must be still mysterious to us; so whether God designs to let us become *heaps and ruins*, or will raise us up to

be a *Palace* and a *defenced City*, is that which is only known to him ; yet we have an Assurance from the *Word of his Grace*, of a Share in that *Inheritance of the Saints in Light*, we are now made *Heirs and Joint-Heirs with Christ*, he has promised, That *because he lives we shall live also*; and that as he purchased a Kingdom for us by his Blood, so he is gone before us *to prepare a Place in it for us*; that is, to mark out Degrees of Glory, which are proportioned to such Services and Sufferings as he calls us to for his Names-sake : He counts all our wanderings; all the melancholy Steps that we tread in this our sojourning, and all the Tears that at any time drop from us, are according to a Phrase borrowed from the *Lachrymals* used in that Time, said to be *put in his Bottle*, every Thing we do, either to advance God's Glory, or for the Good of others, even to a *Cup of cold Water*, shall be brought into the Reckoning and put to our Account : And al-together shall work for us a more exceeding (by a *Hyperboly* upon *Hyperboly*, as the Words are in the Original) and *Eternal Weight of Glory* ; we shall then enjoy, not only what far exceeds all that *the Eye hath seen, or the Ear hath heard*, but all that the *Heart of Man*, in all the Compass of Imagination, or Extent of Desire can conceive. Our Bodies shall shine as the Sun in the Kingdom of our Father ; being delivered from all the Clogs of Want, Pain, or Sicknes, from all the Labours of Life, from all the Drudgery to Sin or Appetite, from all Temptations, either from without, or from within us, and from all that is weak, mean, corruptible or mor-

John xiv. 2.

Psal. 56. 8.

2 Cor. iv. 17.

mortal in us, and we shall be in the Resurrection *like unto the Angels of God*, or to a greater than Angels, even the *Son of God* himself, *into whose Likeness these our vile Bodies shall be transformed*; we shall see God *Face to Face*, with so present and so bright a View, as we have of those we now converse with. We now see him, in his Works, in his Word, and in the Face of his dear Son, but we shall then see him *as he is*, in as comprehensive a Light, as finite and limited Understandings are capable of. We shall then understand his Attributes, the Extent and Design of Creation and Providence: All those inextricable Difficulties which do now perplex the best Understandings, shall then be clearly apprehended by us: We shall be made *like unto him*, perfectly pure, full of universal Love and Goodness, loving and beloved by all the Hosts above: Even the *Innumerable Company of Angels, with the Spirits of just Men made Perfect*, who compose that *General Assembly and Church of the First-born*. We shall see, and *be ever with the Lord*, who purchased all this for us, and whose Love to us we shall then more distinctly apprehend, and more perfectly love, in return for the Love wherewith he loved us, and procured all this to us. We shall then be raised up to all the possible Transports of Joy, and be eternally possessed with such a Sense of the Majesty, Glory and Goodness of God, that we shall be ever adoring and praising him with the most elevated Acts, that our Natures then advanced to the utmost Possibilities of Perfection shall be capable of; and we shall see that the blessed State into which we are then brought shall never end, but shall last for

Heb. xii. 22;

23.

for ever : Here : is a short View of what the Gospel, *the Word of God's Grace*, doth both propose and promise to us.

V. I come in the last place, to set forth the Character of those who have a Right to this Inheritance ; *all those who are sanctified*. That being a State of the utmost possibility of the Exaltation and Sanctification of our Natures, and it being proposed as the Reward of our Services and Sufferings here, we cannot have any Prospect of attaining it, unless we employ our Faculties in the best manner we can, to arrive at some real degrees of that Holiness, by which we do both resemble God, who is essentially holy, and Christ who was *holy in all manner of Conversation*. We pass through this Life, as through a State of Probation, in which we may attain to some measure of that, in which we shall then be made perfect. All great Ends are compassed by Means suitable to them ; for as such as corrupt their Natures, and vitiate their Faculties, run themselves into a State of Darkness and Depravation, which must carry them to a Blackness of Darkness, and Everlasting Destruction ; so those who do now *purifie themselves as he is pure*, shall be then made perfectly *pure*, when all those Defects that do now hang about them shall be done away : It is therefore so certain, that without *true holiness we shall never see the Lord*, that it is not necessary to say any thing more to make out so plain a Point.

It is more necessary to give such a Description of those who are *sanctified*, that none may deceive themselves with wrong Notions and false Appearances :

ances : It is not only the managing one's outward Behaviour, so that every thing in that may look well and be decent : This is indeed necessary, but this may be a Thing put on for a while, as a Mask on Design, or it may be a piece of natural Modesty, or of Prudence. It is not only an upright Sincerity in our Dealings, tho' that is highly valuable, that makes up the Character. It is not barely Temperance and Sobriety, and the avoiding all the Excesses of Riot, that will put us among those that are *Sanctified* : It is not only the having sound Principles and good Opinions in Religion, nor the being Regular in the Publick Worship of God, much less the being sullen and morose towards all others, who think not as we do with Relation to it in those Matters, that will compleat the Character ; nay nor the observing such Practices in our secret Devotion, as were brought on us by a good Education, and which we are not yet had enough to throw them quite up, that being all put together make a Person truly *Sanctified*.

To bring this Matter into a short Compass, a Man who is truly *Sanctified*, is one who being convinced of the Truth of the Christian Religion, studies carefully those sacred Writings in which it is contained, reads them diligently, and meditates much on them : Upon these he settles into solid Principles of a Universal Scheme of his whole Life, both in the private and publick Parts of it, in his Family and Neighbourhood, in his Calling and Station, and even in his Diversions and Recreations, that he may in every Part of his Life answer his Profession, and live up to the Rules prescribed
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in it. This he follows in a close and constant Attention to his Thoughts, Words, and Actions: In order to this he prays earnestly to God for Assistance and Direction, and calls himself often to a strict Account of all he does, as in the Presence of God. He does not allow himself so much as the bare Speculation of any Sin with Pleasure: He is humbled before God, and begs Pardon if his Thoughts have wandered into the Love of any Sin, much more if these have broke out into sinful Words or Actions: He does not distinguish between the several Sorts of Sin, as if he might indulge himself in any of them by reason of Interest or Inclination, or as if he might buy out a Licence for some Sins by an over-doing in other Matters: But he studies to keep all God's Commandments, obeying some indeed as the more Important, with more Zeal, but leaving none undone. He pursues this thro' the whole Course of his Life; and does not imagine, that by some more than ordinary Devotion at some times, perhaps on the Eve of a Sacrament Day, he can purchase Leave to return back to those Sins that he seems only to forsake for a Season; like a Drunkard who is sober under a Course of Physick, only on Design to be capable of returning to more Excesses that way. He still pursues the *Sanctifying* the whole Man in all manner of Conversation, nor is he satisfied with low Degrees of *Sanctification*, but is ever endeavouring to cleanse himself more and more, *from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God.*

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His Saviour is his Pattern, and he is often observing how defective he is in his Conformity to him, that so he may be humbled under it, and may still press forward towards that *Mark* of being made a Partaker of the *Divine Nature*.

Here are then the Characters of all those *that are Sanctified* ; happy they who feel these truly begun, and sincerely carried on within them. In these they have their Title to the Inheritance of the Saints in Light : These are the true Steps that lead to it, as it is the certain Reward of all those that walk in them.

GOD Grant we all may feel, that we may have those Earnests of that Inheritance in us ; for then in due Time we shall attain the Possession of it : Which God of his Infinite Mercy grant us, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

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A CHARGE

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CHARGE

Given at the

Triennial Visitation

OF THE

DIOCESE of *SALISBURY*,

In the Year 1714.

A
CHARGE

Given at the
Triennial Visitation
 OF THE
Diocese of Salisbury, &c.

My Reverend and Dear Brethren,

WHEN I first visited my Diocese, five and twenty Years ago, as I preached round the whole Circuit of the Diocese; so I chose the most proper Texts that I could think of, to set before myself, as well as my Brethren, the Pastoral Duty in the best Light in which I could put it, I will now recite to you all those Texts, hoping that you will carry them in your Memory, and meditate on them; and I am confident this will have a very good Effect on you; I set them down in the Order in which they lie in the New Testament.

*Acts ch. xx. ver. 28. Take heed therefore unto yourselves,
 and to all the Flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you
 Overseers*

Overseers (or Bishops) to feed the Church which he hath purchased with his own Blood.

1 Cor. iii. 9. For we are Labourers together with God : (or fellow-Labourers for God) ye are God's Husbandry, ye are God's Building.

2 Cor. v. 12. Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ, as tho' God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Coll. i. 28. Whom we preach, warning every Man, and teaching every Man in all wisdom, that we may present every Man perfect in Christ Jesus.

1 Thess. ii. 10, 11. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved our selves among you that believe.

As you know, how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a Father doth his Children.

1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them ; that thy profiting may appear.

Take heed unto thy self, and to the Doctrine : continue in them, for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. And the Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men ; apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them Repentance, to the acknowledging of the Truth.

1 Pet. v. 23. Feed the Flock of God which is among you (or as much as lies in you) taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being Lords over God's Heritage, (or not over-ruling your Shares or Lots) but being Examples to the Flock ; and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.

In these, you will find the main Lines of your Duty, both as to your private Deportment and your Labours ; But now since, perhaps, this may be the last
Time

Time that I may see you in this manner, and that both the Age I have arrived at, and other Circumstances, call upon me to consider the Account, that I, as well as you, must give we know not how soon, of the *Ministry that we have received of the Lord Jesus*, I could find no part of the Scripture so proper to guide myself, and to lead you into the right Method of seeing how we ought to make up our Accounts, as this last Discourse of St. Paul to those of Ephesus; in which we find him full of the Apprehensions of what was to befall him at Jerusalem. These led him to reflect on all that had past in those his Labours, in which he may be well set up by us, as the perfectest Pattern next to him *who did no Sin*. In this View we will find matter, both of Humiliation and of Encouragement; we will see Cause to be humbled, when we find how defective we have been; but at the same time to be encouraged, if we, upon a strict Search, find that we have in some sort, though at a great distance, studied to imitate so bright an Example.

Ver. 18. St. Paul begins with an Appeal to what they knew, *after what manner he had been among them from the time he came first into Asia, and that at all Seasons*.

The *Seasons* might have required some Diversity in his Deportment; but it was all governed by proper Rules suited to every occasion. This calls on us to reflect on the visible Parts of our whole Behaviour in the different Scenes of Life. Have we been serious and solemn in the publick Worship of God? Have we been diligent in the Discharge of our Duty? Have we not only avoided crying and scandalous Sins? (Oh that our Consciences could bear us witness to this!) but even excusable Levities and Indecencies, which though they do not blacken our Character, yet soil and lessen it? Is our private Conversation answerable to the Appearances we put on in publick? In all *Seasons* we are in the Sight of God; He knows what

what we are ; our Consciences will tell us, if we consult them, whether one uniform Principle governs us at all Times, or not ?

Ver. 19. *Serving the Lord with all humility of Mind, and with many Tears and Temptations which beset me by the laying in wait of the Jews.*

Acts xxvii.
23.

St. Paul makes this his Title, that he was the *Servant of the Lord*, therefore he was always Executing every thing given him in Commission to do. *We serve the Lord Christ* ; we receive his Wages, and ought to be doing his Work. Are we the Servants of Men or of Parties ? No, we ought to dedicate ourselves to this one thing ; maintaining St. Paul's Character in this, when he said, *God whose I am and whom I serve* : By the Vows we made at our Ordination, and by the appropriating Character with which we were separated for the Work of the Ministry, we were then solemnly dedicated to the Service of God ; so that setting aside as much as may be the Cares of the World, we ought to turn all our Thoughts to this one Thing.

The *Humility of Mind*, in which St. Paul had learned of him who was *lowly in Heart*, will give a Commanding Authority to every piece of Service that we set about. A Loftiness of Look, and a Haughtiness of Behaviour, will ill become the Servants of him, *who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister*. A proud and boistrous Deportment will create Opposition, and give an Aversion to all that we set about : Whereas a mild and an insinuating Temper, with a humble Behaviour, will commend us and our Ministry, even to those who are not yet convinced that they ought to acknowledge it. Certainly an Insolent and assuming Behaviour will heighten Prejudices ; but a modest Air will break through them, and gain a respectful Hearing, and that may make way to a full Conviction.

If the Humility of the Apostles and of their Fellow-Labourers overcame all the Pre-possessions that the World

World had against them; What may not we expect in our present Circumstances, and with all our Advantages? But by *Humility*, I do not mean any thing that is low or unbecoming, fawning or abject; we must leave that to those who *lie in wait to deceive*, who *creep into Houses to make Profelites*, and to devour the Substance of those whom they ensnare and lead away Captive. A Man may well assert the Authority of his Function and Mission, without the Airs of Arrogance and Scorn.

St. Paul joined many Tears with his *Humility*; whether he shed those Tears in remembrance of his Blaspheming the Name of Christ, and Persecuting his Members, while he was in a State of Ignorance and Unbelief; or whether they were shed in his Intercessions for those he laboured among, is that which we cannot determine; but we are sure we on our part have great Cause to shed many Tears, when we enter into our own Hearts, and look back upon our own Lives; when we remember the Sins of our Youth; when we reflect on our own great Omissions, and on the Sins of our holy Things. What reason do we often find in ourselves to apprehend, that God may say to us, *What hast thou to do to declare my Statutes, or that thou shouldest take my Covenant in thy Mouth? Seeing thou hatest Instruction, and castest my Words behind thee.* Psal. l. 16, 17. O let us look back often on all our Errors and Failings, that so we may lie in the dust before God, crying out with David, *For thy Namesake, O Lord, pardon mine Iniquity for it is great.* Psal. xxv. 11. The more deeply we are humbled for these, and the more bitterly that we mourn over them, we may the more certainly reckon that they are pardoned, and shall never rise up to confound or condemn us.

Let us have our Days of Fasting and Mourning on our own Account; and then as the High-Priest among the Jews, was to begin the Service of the Day of
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Levit. xvi.
11.

Atonement, with a Sacrifice for his own Sins, and after that he was to offer the Sacrifice for the Expiation of the Sins of the whole Nation ; so if we offer the Sacrifice of a *broken and contrite Heart* for our own Sins, we may hope that our Tears and Intercessions for others, will go up as a *Sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God*. If we see just Grounds to apprehend that a great and terrible Day of the Lord may be near us, then certainly we, who are the Priests and Ministers of the Lord ought to lie prostrate before him, weeping and praying, *Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thy Heritage to Reproach*: We ought to water the Seed of the Word that we sow with our Tears ; that so it may grow up under our Care, by our secret Intercessions as well as by our publick Labours. If we did accustom our selves, before we do enter on the Performance of any Part of our Duty, to pray earnestly for Assistance and Direction in it, and for a Blessing on it after we have done it, we might then expect Effects of another Nature than I am afraid we see on our Labours. Our Work is God's Work ; and all our Attempts would succeed in another Manner than they do, if we begun and ended every Performance with earnest Applications at the Throne of Grace.

Joel ii. 17.

St. Paul adds, that besides his Tears he was in *many Temptations*, which *beset him* by the daily *lying in wait of the Jews*. They thought they were the People of God, in Possession of the Covenant made with their Fathers ; they put all their Religion in performing Rituals, and in a cruel Persecution of those who departed from them. And do not these Characters agree to the Spirit and Practices of Popery ? They value themselves as the Mother Church ; tho' they have corrupted the primitive Simplicity of this Religion with infinite Additions, and a vast Load of Ceremonies, pretending mystical Significations and great Effects from them: By which Men are led away from the

the true Design of Religion, to amuse themselves with Pomp and Shew: But if any Man presumes so much as to doubt of any thing determined among them, then he must prepare himself to suffer the utmost that Fury and Cruelty can contrive, and that in the blackest Methods of Dissimulation and Falshood. These are *lying in wait* now to deceive us with soft Words, to lay us asleep, and to engage us into Quarrels among our selves, which must both distract and weaken us. But as St. Paul heartily pray'd for these his Persecutors, he also studied to gain them by all honest Compliances; for his own part he could have wish'd to have been universally hated and *held in Execration* for their fakes, so we ought not to suffer our selves to be embittered by all the ill Usage that we, or others may have met with at their Hands: We ought to pity and to pray for them, and to be wanting in no Acts of Charity towards them; except only such as may put us in their Power: For we know what that must end in, even in utter Extirpation; of which we see too many Instances before our Eyes, to be able to doubt of it. Rom. ix. 3.

And are there not others among our selves too deeply tainted with this Pharisaical Temper, who set too high a Value on Rituals, and on some particular Notions, and bitterly censure, and as far as they can, even persecute, those who do not think as they do, by Slander and Defamation: Endeavouring to defeat all their Labours, and to render their Persons and their Ministry as odious and contemptible as they can; and that without a Shadow of Truth, or the least Provocation? How much of this we our selves meet with, is but too often laid in our Way. We cannot but lament when we see such Things so freely vented and so readily received: I hope we study on these Occasions to follow the Practice of our Blessed Lord, and do pray, *Father forgive them they know*

not what they do. But if by such Means the Good that we design to do is in any sort obstructed, they shall *bear their Burden*, and they will feel it a heavy one in the Day of their Account. I will dwell no longer on so melancholy a Subject, I wish I could pray more over it, and so master it.

Ver. 20.

And how I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly and from House to House.

In Opposition to all these Practices, St. Paul took Pains fully to instruct the Christians. He kept up no Part of that which might be *profitable* for them; he avoided what was dark and not easily apprehended: But for the practical and useful Parts, he had no Reserves: He opened all to them, he had both *shewed* it, and had insisted in a more particular Instructing them: He had not only set every thing once before them, but he cleared all Difficulties and answered all Objections: He did this both *publickly*, and from *House to House*. In the Discourses he had to them all in common he stated the Matters truly to them; he gave them a Right Understanding of them, and for such of them as required a more minute Satisfaction than was necessary for a larger Assembly, he took Pains on them in private.

Here is our Pattern: We ought to instruct our People in all the Parts of Religion, that it may concern them to be instructed in: We are not to do as in Popery, to keep our People hoodwinked, in an implicate Faith, and a blind Obedience, to deny them the Use of the Scriptures, and to *keep* the Worship of God in an unknown Tongue: We have no Reserves of Traditions to be kept in our own Hands till we think fit to publish them. We have an Example set us by the Apostles: For tho' they had, by the Miracles that were done by them, a Right to oblige all the Churches to submit to them, yet they managed their Authority with

with such regard to Men's Reasons and Understandings, that they opened the Scriptures to them, and commended those who examined their Doctrine, Acts xvii. 12. comparing it with the Scriptures. We ought to dwell the more copiously on such particular Matters, as the Circumstances of the Time, and of Points in Question and on Foot may require it.

The Manner of *St. Paul's* instructing them does likewise challenge our Imitation; he did it both *publickly* and *from house to house*. Our Sermons ought to be plain and instructive, short and clear, deliver'd with Gravity and Zeal: First we ought to shew the Nature of that which we teach others, together with Arguments from Scripture, Reason, and other Authorities, such as may fully convince our Hearers of the Truth of the Things we set before them, avoiding the Perplexity of a labour'd Stile, and the Affectations of Learning and Eloquence: Not wearying them out with unintelligible Subtilties, drawn out to a tedious Length. We ought also to follow our publick Labours with private Instructions, considering such particular Cases, where private Explanations or Admonitions may be further necessary, and where they ought to be secretly applied; cultivating such Plants as may deserve a distinguishing Care; satisfying private Scruples, and descending even to the Weaknesses of some disorder'd Minds; remembering how our Saviour applied his Care to a sullen Woman that refused him a Draught of Water. In a Word, we ought to make it our Work to teach and instruct our People with our utmost Diligence, and in the best Methods we can contrive: We are their Pastors, and they are our Flock on whom we ought continually to attend: We are *Labourers* and *Builders*, and so we ought to follow them with a constant Application and daily Care; but as this ought to be our Work at all Times, so most especially we ought to set about it with great Tenderneſs, when
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any of our Flock are under the Hand of God, either in Affliction or chiefly in Sickneſs; they are then generally apt to hear, and to reflect, to reſolve and to promiſe; this is to be managed with Care and Diſcretion; neither ſhewing too eaſie an Indulgence, nor an extream Rigor: And we ought to avoid carefully the giving Way to that Vulgar and fatal Error, by which People fanſy, if they receive the Sacrament at their Death, that their Peace is made with God; as if that were a ſure Paſſport to bring thoſe to Heaven who neglected it in the whole Courſe of their Lives: Here is the moſt important Part of our Miniſtry, in which we ought to be moſt particularly watchful and cautious.

But though upon different Occaſions it may be fit for us to apply ourſelves to ſeveral Subjects, inſiſting at different times more than Ordinary upon ſome of them; yet there are ſome capital ones, that we ought to keep in our View perpetually, and to imploy ourſelves moſt in them; and theſe are the Things that St. Paul labour'd chiefly in.

Ver. 21.

Teſtifying both to the Jews and alſo to the Greeks Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

Theſe ought to be our conſtant Subjects, upon which in *Season* and out of *Season* we ought to labour continually: We ought to begin with this, with which both St. John Baptiſt and our Saviour began their Preaching ſaying, *Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at Hand*: We ought to awaken our People's Conſciences, to make them apprehend the Guilt and the Deſilement of Sin, and the Judgments of God that hang over their Heads, while they live on in their Sins, and are without God in the World. We ought to ſet the Terrors of God before them, and to ſpeak of this Matter with all the Weight and Authority that we can put in our Words: We ought to give them their full Efficacy, by ſhewing that we do ſincerely appre-

apprehend the Truth of them ourselves, as well as we set them before others; that it may not be thought that we put many dreadful Words together only to terrifie others; but that we ourselves have no Concern about them. This will so effectually defeat our Endeavours, that all our Labour will be in vain, till it appears that the Matters which we study to bear in upon others, do really make a deep Impression upon ourselves.

There is nothing that we ought to insist more upon with relation to *Repentance*, than to bear down the too commonly received Notion, that a sorrowing for Sin is Repentance: Whereas it is only the Beginning or the Effect of it. Here the World is apt to run into fatal Mistakes. These seem to have both Authority and common Practice on their Side in the Church of *Rome*, where Acts of Contrition with some slight Penances are enjoined, and upon that Absolution is given: I am afraid this Conceit is too commonly received every where; People are apt to think, if before a Sacrament, or after some heinous Sin committed they confess it to God with Acts of Sorrow, that are perhaps forced Acts, which they command themselves to think, as they may utter sorrowful Words, without a real Compunction, that then they have truly repented: But let the Sorrow be ever so real, if that does not rise from a Change of Principle, so that there is no internal *Renovation of Mind* (which is the true Notion of the Word in the Original) it may be indeed a godly Sorrow, but it is not *Repentance unto Life* for that must lie deep in the Soul, and appear in the Change of a Man's whole Life and Deportment.

Next to our Labours, to bring our People to *Repentance toward God*, we must study to *build them up in our most holy Faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ*, who was a Man like unto us in all Things, but in whom the Eternal Word that was with God, and that was God, dwelt Bodily. The only begotten Son that was in the Bosom of the

the Father was made Flesh, and as he took our Nature on him, so he bore our Sins on his own Body; and is now at the Right-hand of God making Intercession for us. This is the Foundation of our Faith on which we are to build up our Selves, and all that are committed to our Charge. It is the believing this truly, the applying our selves to God for the Pardon of our Sins through his Death, and the offering up our Prayers to God by him, and the putting our whole Trust and Confidence in him, that makes us truly Christians, for without this we are Christians only in Name and Shew. We ought to take all possible Pains to possess our People with a firm Belief of the Gospel, and that Christ did prove his Divine Mission by his Miracles, chiefly by his Resurrection and Ascension, and by the sending down of the Holy Ghost on his Disciples. These Things were written and received in that Age, in which many Hundreds were then alive, who had seen and knew the Truth of the wonderful Facts related in them. These Books were put in the Hands of all the Christians, multiplied into many Copies, and soon after into many Translations: They were also in daily Use, Parcels of them being read in the Assemblies of the Christians every Lord's Day, and we know by the Writings in all the Ages since that Time, that the Books are the same now that they were then, pure and uncorrupted; some small Escapes in Writing, in which some Copies differ from others, amount to nothing that is material.

This is the Foundation of all, and therefore we ought to go often over it, and to dwell much upon it, till we infuse it so deep into our People, that they may become Masters of the Argument, not believing only because they will believe, or in a mere traditional Way, because they were told so, and in their Childhood learned Catechisms, and got into a Rote of professing, and perhaps of thinking that they be-

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lieve it : But we ought to bring them to be able to give a *Reason of the Hope that is in them, to every one that asketh it.* A bare traditional believing, will in a Day of Temptation prove like building on the Sand : Winds and Floods will shake or undermine an ill grounded Confidence. We must carry this yet further than the bare believing that these Things are true ; such a Faith Devils have : We must make our People understand, that this Faith *purifies the Heart, and works by Love ;* and it only becomes a saving and justifying Faith, when upon our entering on the Practice of these Rules, that this Religion prescribes, we feel a real Virtue derived into us that makes us become *new Creatures,* and gives us such a Vital Perception of the Truth of the Promises made us in it, That we receive these as *Earnests of our Inheritance,* and so *taste and see that God is gracious to us.* This makes us *living Stones in the Spiritual Building,* and by this we are said to be *building up our selves in our most holy Faith.*

And now behold I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, Ver. 22, 23. not knowing the Things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every City that Bonds and Affliction abide me.

Upon this General Review of St. Paul's Life and his Labours, it was that he was going on doing his Duty.

He was now carrying up a Supply that he had gathered in the Churches of Greece for the Brethren at Jerusalem, who, what by Reason of the Famine that had been in those Parts, and what by the Unkindness of their Countrymen, wanted that Relief : He resolved to be at Jerusalem this Pentecost, and though he had Reason to apprehend that the Jews who persecuted him in all Places through which he went, would send thither before him severe and false Representations of his Conduct ; and he knew how apt they were

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to receive ill Impressions, and to prosecute these with the utmost Fury, so that he had Reason enough from the Knowledge he had of their Temper and Principles, with which he had been once deeply tinged himself, to look for an ill Reception there; yet this was not all: Inspired Men did in the Cities through which he passed, tell him from a Motion of the Holy Ghost, that *Bonds and Afflictions did abide him there*. These things were apt to work on the natural Man: And Christ having told his Disciples that when they were *persecuted in one City, they might fly to another*, that might seem to warrant his avoiding these, and his going to labour elsewhere: Yet he had a Pressure upon his Spirit, by which he felt himself as one bound to go thither. It seems there was no more revealed to him then, but that he ought to go to *Jerusalem*, the rest was to be opened to him in due time.

Ver. 24.

But none of these Things move me neither count I my Life dear unto my self, so that I might finish my Course with Joy and the Ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God. The Words with which the Verse begins may be rendered, *I make no Account of these Things*, or bring them not into the Reckoning: He esteemed them as nothing: Those which follow *neither count I my Life dear unto me that I might finish*, may be well rendered, *so dear unto me as that I may finish*.

None of these Things moved him: So far from shaking him, that they did not so much as move him. Great Soul! What could move him if these did not? He had a little before that written to the *Romans* that which

Rom. viii. 35. *he felt now stirring powerfully within him, Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword? Nay in all these things we are more than Conquerors, through him who loved us.* He was fixed: His Heart was fixed trusting in the Lord, so that he was not afraid

afraid of those evil Tidings. Bonds and Imprisonments were but feeble Terrours to one, to whom *Life* it self was not so dear, but that he was ready to give it up and to finish his Course with Joy, how severe soever the last Steps of it might be: He knew he was to receive his Crown when he had finished his Course; and to enter into the Joy of his Lord. He was resolved to persist in his Ministry till God should put a Stop to it, who had committed to him a noble Share in that glorious Work, in which he laboured more abundantly than all the Apostles.

He resolved to go on testifying the Gospel, or the glad Tidings of God's Grace and Favour to Mankind. He had been long a Disciple of the Cross, and was ready to lose his Life that he might save it.

And now let us enter into our own Hearts, and ask our selves, what Emotion do we feel within our selves upon the present Prospect of Danger, with which both Friends and Enemies seem to be so much possessed? Do our Minds sink within us? Are we inwardly cast down? If we are the true Disciples of Christ we will rather lift up our Heads and rejoyce, because our Redemption draws near. We may indeed tremble for the Ark of God, for the visible Profession of his holy Gospel, which is perhaps in imminent Danger, we may tremble for the great Numbers that we may fear, will fall in the evil Day, and renounce their holy Religion: We may be also justly afraid of our selves, lest we fall into the Snare of the Devil. A just Fear on all these Accounts is what well becomes us: But this instead of weakening our Faith will heighten it: When we put no Confidence in our selves, and go not out in our own Strength, but take hold of his Strength who will guide us by his Council, and afterwards receive us to his Glory. Let us raise up our Minds to consider the glorious Recompence of Reward that is set before us; that this may animate us to take up the Cross, if God calls us

to suffer *with Joy*; counting it an Honour *not only to believe but to suffer for his Name*, who suffered for us, and bore our Sins on his own Body. Then we become truly his Disciples: We may reckon that our patient Suffering will much advance the Honour of our holy Religion. It will shew that we truly believe it, when we are ready to die for it: And since we must believe that God will be with us in so glorious a Manner, as he was with all the blessed Company of Martyrs who sealed the Faith with their Blood: Our Constancy even in the Extremity of Sufferings, as it must confound our Persecutors; so it will inflame the Zeal of those, who might otherwise sink with Fear and Discouragement; it will raise another Spirit in them, and dispose them to rejoyce when they are called to be baptized with the same Baptism, and to drink of the same Cup.

This was the Seed of the Church; and contributed perhaps no less to the giving it the amazing Progress that it had in the first Ages, than the Miracles themselves had done. In all Places where those Fires were kindled, the Light of the Gospel shined out with the more Advantage by their Means. This same glorious Confirmation was again very conspicuous in the Revival of Christianity at the Reformation; in which this our Church had an eminent Share. Let us therefore lift up our Hands that hung down, and the feeble Knees: That so looking to that Cloud of Witnesses that compass us about, and above all to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith, we may run with Patience the Race that is set before us. We may lawfully pray that this Cup may pass from us. But when it appears that it is the Will of God to put it in our Hands, shall we not drink it? Oh! if we had in us a Measure of the Spirit of Christ, we would rather hasten to that Day of the Lord; with Desire we would desire it, and be straitened in our selves till it were accomplish'd. We know we must all die once, and can we ever die so gloriously, and hope to do

do so much good in and by our Death, as if we should die for him, *who loved us, and has washed us from our Sins in his own Blood, and has made us Kings and Priests for ever unto God?* And who has promised that if we continue faithful to the Death, he will give us the Victory and the Crown of Life. If we are slain for the Word of God and for his Testimony, our Souls shall be joyned to the Blessed who are under the Altar of God, where *white Robes* shall be given us; and we shall be set down at last *on the Throne of God, and reign with Christ for ever.* Oh! that this Prospect could raise such an Ardour of Zeal in us, that we may feel we hate not only Father and Mother, Wife and Children, Brethren and Sisters, but our own Life also, when it stands in Competition with, but much more when it comes in Opposition to the Will and Call of our blessed Lord to follow him, and to suffer for him.

And now behold I know that ye all among whom I have Ver. 25, 26, 27.
gone preaching the Kingdom of God shall see my Face no more.

Wherefore I take you to record this Day that I am pure from the Blood of all Men.

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the Counsel of God.

St. Paul knew that those to whom he spake were to see his Face no more; upon which he seems to rise in his Speech to them with a more solemn Authority, challenging them all to bear Record that he was free from the Blood of all Men. He had given them both Instruction and Warning: He had set them a Pattern in his own Deportment; He had planted the Churches with his Labours, and had watered them with his Tears, and sometimes with his Blood: He had been tender and affectionate, careful and diligent; he had preach'd in Season, and out of Season, a Phrase importing at all Times, not only upon the regular Returns of their Assemblies, on the first Day of the Week, but upon many

many other Occasions, out of these *regular Seasons* : For this is not to be understood as simply out of *Season*. In this he charges *Timothy*, whom he sent to cultivate what he had planted, to follow the Pattern he had set him. He had connived at no Man's Sin, as he was not afraid of any Man's Person : He had also joyned with his Zeal and Care all the Softness of Prudence, *becoming all things to all Men, that by any Means he might gain some.*

It will be an unspeakable Comfort to us, if when we are called to make up our Accounts, we dare look back, and find that we have no Guilt but our own to be charged with ; that is heavy enough God knows. If the Guilt of Blood shed by any has a Cry, how much a louder Cry will the Loss of Souls have before God ? If our Example has had an ill Influence, either to draw any to Sin, or to encourage them to continue in it, how black and crying is this Guilt ? And with how much Sorrow, and how many Tears is it to be wash'd off ? And with what Earnestness ought we to pray for such Persons, on whom any thing that they have seen in us may have such fatal Effects ? But if we have not been guilty in so crying a manner, yet God will require at our Hands the Blood of all those who by our Remissness, and by our Failing in our Duty, have either been left to continue or to live on in Sin, chiefly if a feeble Fear has restrained us, or a criminal Indulgence to such as are kind to us has stop'd our Mouths, so that we gave them no Warning, but left them to sleep on in their Sins till they perish'd in them. We will feel this to be a Load upon us able to sink us when we think have we left *those Souls to perish for whom Christ died !* And that on any mean or base Ends. Have we declared to them *all the Counsel of God* ? Have we set the Terrours of God before them ? And have we besought them by the Mercies of God ? Have we been careful to *instruct* the Ignorant, to help the

the Poor, to support the Weak, and to relieve them as we are able, or to procure Relief to them? Have we studied to enter into the Council of God? Have we read the Scriptures much, and laboured to attain to a Spiritual Understanding of them, by frequent Prayers and Meditations?

St. Paul from these Promises comes to the Main of his Exhortation, *Take heed therefore unto your selves and to all the Flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers, to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own Blood.* We must first watch over our Selves, if we would watch over others with Success: We must look to our Deportment, for the World, both the good and the bad, observe us: The good are edified when they see our good Conversation, as a Pattern teaching them how to follow us as we follow Christ: They are not a little cast down when they see Things amiss in us. The bad are confounded, when they find nothing in us to gratifie their Malice, they wait for our Halting; they will triumph on it as a Victory on their Side; they will lay hold either on real or seeming Faults; they will aggravate them all they can, and spread them as far as their Reach can go. We are as a *City set on a Hill that cannot be hid.* The Scandals that any one of our Body gives the World cast some Reflections on all about them, while our Enemies think some are more barefaced, and others are better masked, but they conclude all are alike guilty. There will be a Mixture of *Tares* among the Wheat, till the great Day of severing the one from the other comes: Yet though it be impossible but that some *Scandals will be given, wo unto those by whom they are given:* But though visible Blemishes are monstrous Things in a Clergyman, yet it is only a low Degree in Vertue for us to be free of them. There are some Sins of which the single Acts have not so foul a Deformity in them, yet the Habits of them shew Minds no less depraved

Ver. 28.

depraved than other more scandalous ones do : such are Pride, Passion, Covetousness, Evil-speaking, and Revenge ; these do go often by better Names, and are called the asserting our own Right, our Zeal, a prudent Frugality, a Hatred of Sin, and of Sinners; but let every Man enter into his own Heart, and ask himself before God, what are his true Principles, and by what Rules does he govern himself. God is not mocked, tho' we may deceive others, and study even to deceive our selves. The Freedom from just Imputations is indeed a great Advantage : As for that which is mere Fiction and Falshood, we are not to be much concerned in it ; since the Son of God bore such a Share in these, we must commit our selves to God, and look on this as a Tryal of our Patience, and must submit to it as a Punishment : But even in such a Case, we ought, if we dare, to make our Appeals to God of our Innocence ; we ought also to reflect on the other Errors of our Life that are not known, but are perhaps of the same Sort, and reckon that the Falshoods charged on us, do call on us to reflect on those Parts of our Lives, that tho' they have escaped the Publick View, yet are no less Criminal. But how valuable a Thing soever it be to have no black Imputations cast on us ; this is but a low Size, to be *blameless, harmless, and without Rebuke* : We ought to *shine as Lights, as becomes the Sons of God*, we must not only abstain from all Appearance of Evil, such as a Levity of Behaviour, or Discourse, the unnecessary being in Publick-Houses, the going toward the Neighbourhood of Sin, as if we were trying how near we may come to Sin without engaging in it: We must on the contrary keep at the greatest Distance from it : A Clergyman that is much at Home, and oft in his Study, is safe, and out of the Way of much Evil : That keeps him out of a promiscuous Conversation, and saves a great Loss of Time ; it will not only
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be a Mean to furnish him with good Materials for the Work he is engag'd in, but it will create him so much the more Respect from those, who may be from that induced to believe, that he is exercised in somewhat that may turn to their good, and their profiting. Too great Familiarity with those who cannot rightly understand it, must lessen us in their Esteem, who seeing us so like themselves, may come to have but low Thoughts of us, and it will take much off from what we can say to them from the Pulpit, when they find us to be far different from it in our Familiar Discourse. A meek and a humble, a patient and quiet Temper, a serious, but unaffected Gravity, an exact Sobriety and Modesty, and a Readiness both to forgive and to do Good for Evil, with such a Measure of Bounty as our Condition can bear; these are bright and shining Characters, which will beyond the Force of any Arguments and Books raise our Dignity, recommend our Persons and our Labours; they will draw Respect, and silence Opposition; they will give an Authority to all we say, either in private or publick.

This ought to be our first and chief Care: And this will both dispose us to discharge that which follows, of taking heed to all the Flock, and enable us to acquit our selves in it with great Advantage. In the first Simplicity of the World, the looking after a Flock was one of the Primitive Employments: And as it required a constant Attendance and great Care, so the Figure came to be applied to higher Labours, Kings were called the *Shepherds of the People*, and God himself descend to be called the *Shepherd of Israel*, the Figure was applied by the Prophets in the *Old Testament*, and is carried on in the *New*, to those who have the Care of Souls committed to them; to put them in Mind of a daily waiting on their Duty, and of the tender Care with which they ought to manage the Flock. They have a great Account to give, since they must not only answer, as all others must do, for
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their own Souls, but must give an Account of all the Flock, neglecting none for their Meanness, and afraid of none for their Eminence.

The two Considerations added, are of the greatest Weight to enforce the Duty: The Charge is committed to us by *the Holy Ghost*, who has constituted us the *Overseers* or *Bishops of the Flock*. I need not tell you how weak a Pretence that which is brought against the Episcopal Order is, because those who are here called *Bishops*, were called *Elders* Verse 18. These Terms were then promiscuously used. So the Apostles and their Fellow-Labourers are also called *Deacons*, in all those Places where you find the Word *Minister*, which is in the Original *Deacon*. So if this is a good Argument, that *Bishop* and *Presbyter* import the same Office, it will also prove that *Deacon* is likewise the same Office. *Elder* was a Term importing both Age and Authority: St. Peter takes it to himself, as well as St. John: They call themselves *Elders*, which only amounts to this, that there was not yet a strict and determined Signification fixed to these Terms: but that grew up with a little Time, to be appropriated to those distinct Functions.

These Bishops were by an immediate and an extraordinary Motion of the *Holy Ghost*, called to their Function, as St. Clement informs us, and in that strict Sense they cannot be applied to those who are now by ordinary Methods brought into the Service of the Church: Yet among us, when any are Ordained *Deacons*, they are asked if they believe that they are inwardly moved by the *Holy Ghost* to undertake the Office, and they answer, that they believe they are. This is a Lying to the *Holy Ghost*, if those who say it are so ignorant that they know nothing of it, and feel nothing within them that answers it. The true Account of this Question and Answer is, That such as are inwardly called of God to this Holy Function, do set about it with a sincere Design to advance God's Glory, and to edify his Church: If these are a Man's Motives, he may

may justly reckon that they arise from the Motions of the Divine Spirit within him, for they are not the Growth of the natural Man. If then we have a CHARGE put upon us, though in the ordinary Way, by the Spirit of God, as it is no small Dignity to which he has raised us, so we must expect to be called to a strict Account of this Commission.

It is to *feed the Church of God*, to set before them the sound Doctrines of Christianity, not corrupted, nor sophisticated with false Glosses or impure Mixtures, to lead them to those green Pastures, the plain and simple Nourishment, the *Meat that endureth to everlasting Life*; the *Bread that came down from Heaven*, in the true and Spiritual Sense, for his Words are *Spirit and Life*, not the Sacramental Bread, for it is certain that a Man may *eat thereof* and yet *die*: So it can be only meant of his Doctrine, for *whosoever eats his Flesh and drinks his Blood, has everlasting Life, and shall never die* (the Language and Figure of Life, importing the digesting his Words into an inward Nourishment.) The dividing this Word aright, instructing the Ignorant, exhorting the Remiss, admonishing those that are out of the Way, the comforting the afflicted, the humbling the proud and supporting the lowly, are the several Portions, of which a faithful Steward will give every one his Share in due Season.

There is added to this another Consideration, That God has purchased the CHURCH *with his own Blood*; you cannot but observe here, that Christ is truly God, the Blood which this Purchase cost him is called the *Blood of God*, not as if the Divinity in him was capable of suffering, but as the Union between our Souls and Bodies is of such a Nature, that an unaccountable Communication is interchanged between them. What belongs to the one Part, is in the common Forms of Speech ascribed to the whole Man; so here God and Man are so united, that all that belongs to the Man is spoken of as also belonging to God. These Words set forth both the Dignity of the CHURCH, that it is the

Purchase of no less Value than of the *Blood of God*, it also sets forth the Incomprehensible Love of God, who laid down his Life for us : We see in this, as well the high Value of immortal Souls, as the heinous Guilt of Sin that could be redeemed at no lower Rate. The Redemption of the *Soul is precious*, and if the Time is let pass, *it ceaseth for ever*. Souls then of such Value and so dear to God, ought to be looked after at another Rate than many do, who seem to think it below them to labour in such mean Work, and therefore turn it over to such a Stipendiary as can be hired at the lowest Rates. Do such Persons think it below them to feed or watch over those Souls for which Christ was willing to lay down his Life? Shall a remiss and slight performing of Offices, and the reading of Essays rather than Sermons once a Week, while the Souls of the Flock are not all the Week long perhaps once thought on, pass for the feeding the Church? Shall we decline our Labour, when he did not refuse his Blood? Shall we who *live by the Altar*, not *serve at the Altar*? And shall we receive the *Hire*, without the Title that the *Labourer* has to it? This is an Abuse that is tolerated no where, and in no Church in the World but among us : And can we magnify our Constitution, when Abuses that *Popery* is ashamed of, and has thrown off, yet have the Face of Law, and are in common Practice with us. Oh how many Souls, both of Pastors and People perish by this Means ! We have the Purchase of Christ's Blood put into our Hands, to be secured and perfected by our Labours. Let us but think of the dying Groans of the Son of God, and see if these do not raise a Tenderness and beget a Zeal in us, towards those immortal Souls, which through our Neglect or ill Conduct run the hazard of their perishing eternally, and of our perishing eternally with them. Let us repeat the Word *Eternally, Eternally*, till we feel our selves brought under the overcoming Power of so great a Thought. Repeat this Verse frequently in your Minds ; for by

so doing, a noble Sense of Things will be awaken'd within you, of which you and many others may come to feel the happy Effects to all Eternity.

I have said so much in the Sermon of the two following Verses, both with relation to the *grievous Wolves*, and to those *among themselves* who were *to arise and to speak perverse Things*, that I shall add no more on them; only I must inform you of one thing, which I did not think so proper for a Sermon. Above two Years ago, one of the Assertors of the Invalidity of Lay-Baptism objected to me, That whereas I had affirmed, that ever from the Cyprianick Age, the Tradition of the Church had been in favour of Baptism as valid, by what Hand soever it was Administered, so long as it was *by Water, in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*: Yet in Answer to this he has objected, that in a very Numerous Council, where there were three Patriarchs and seven and fifty Metropolitans, in the Year 1166, all those Baptisms by Lay Hands were condemned; this rests on the Authority of *Matthew Blastaris* a Greek Monk, who wrote in the Year 1335: He indeed tells an incredible Story of this, as one of the greatest Councils that ever met; though it may be a Question, whether there were then so many Metropolitans in all the Eastern Churches; and that in Countries commanded by *Mahometan* Princes, and in the Heat of the Holy Wars: At that time, such an Assembly might have provoked them to a general Massacre of all the Christians in those Parts: So that this seems to be a Forgery of some among the *Greeks*: For *Glycas* who lived about that time, cites the LI. Canon made by *Nicephorus* Patriarch of *Constantinople*, quite contrary to this; in which he, with the Holy Fathers who were present, decreed, that when there was no Priest, the Father or any other Orthodox Person might Baptize Infants not yet Baptized. This is published by *Leunclavius*, in his Collection of the Decrees of the *Greek Church*, and it does not appear that ever the *Greek Church* condemned Lay Baptism.

P. 244.

Ad Annum
1148. Art. 46

rism: A Hundred Year after *Blastaris* wrote, the Reconciliation between the *Greek* and the *Roman Church* was made up at *Florence*. But no Mention was then made of any Difference between them as to this Matter. The *Armenians* came at the same time and desired to be likewise united to the *Roman Church*, under the Protection of the *Greek Emperor*; and in the Decree that Pope *Eugenius* made for their Re-union, where an Enumeration is made of the Doctrines of the *Roman Church*, on the Head of Baptism, this is set down, *Minister hujus Sacramenti est Sacerdos, cui ex officio competit Baptizare: In causa autem necessitatis non solum Sacerdos vel Diaconus, sed etiam Laicus vel Mulier, imo etiam Paganus & Hereticus baptizare potest. The Minister of this Sacrament is the Priest, to whose Office it belongs to baptize; but in the Case of Necessity, not only a Priest or a Deacon, but even a Lay-man or a Woman, and even a Pagan or a Heretick may baptize. Baronius* indeed tells us of a Practice among the *Mahometans*, that they forced the Christian Priests to baptize their Children, before they Circumcised them, looking on that as a Charm; such Baptisms he tells us were declared void, for they were indeed no Baptisms: Persons so baptized were decreed to be re-baptized, if they became Christians. This was all that he knew of the Matter. This is also related by *Blastaris*, together with the Condemnation of those Baptisms, as being no true Baptisms. The Motion upon this that was said to be made by the Priest or Bishop of *Heracleo*, for condemning those who were baptized by Persons that were not in Holy Orders, but only pretended to be so, must rest on the Credit of *Blastaris*.

To maintain the Decision, that such ought to be Re-baptized, Reference is made to the 46th and 47th Canons of the Apostles: By the 46th Canon, *A Bishop who received the Baptism of Hereticks is condemned*: By the 47th, *He who Re-baptizes those who had a true Baptism is likewise condemned*. The reconciling these two is to be taken from the Forms in which some Hereticks did baptize. *Irenaeus* tells us, That the *Gnosticks* did baptize,

in the Name Of the Unknown Father of all Things, and Lib. I. c. 18.
of Truth the Mother of all, and in him who descended upon
Jesus, for Union and Redemption, and for the Communion of
Powers and Vertues. Baptism with those Wordes was cer-
tainly no Baptism. It seems likewise, that since the
Paulianists are excepted in the Canon of the Council
of Nice against Re-baptizing, that the Form of Bap-
tism was altered by them. I have all this while neg-
lected to answer this Objection, but I thought I
owed you this clear Account of that Matter.

I confess, I am grieved to see a Spirit rising and
like to prevail among us, of going off from the
Grounds on which the Reformation was carried on
and established. In many there seems to be a Willing-
ness to draw near to Popery, and to think well of it.
As for Personal Charity to Papists, I thank God my
Heart is full of it. I have known, and have particu-
larly loved many good Men among them: But I can
never enough express my Abhorrence of the Spirit
that prevails among them, of the Corruptions of their
Worship, of the monstrous Abuse of Confession and
Absolution, of the detestable Venality of all Things
at Rome, and of the intolerable Tyranny of that
Court. It is a vain Thing to think Matters among
them can ever be reformed by themselves. These
are airy Speculations, to which the Conduct of the
Council of Trent ought to have put an end 150 Year
ago.

A Voluminous Author, who has lately pretended
to have written our Ecclesiastical History, seems to have
carried one Design in his Mind, from the Beginning
to the End of his 2d. Vol. (I have not read his first)
to soften and excuse the Corruptions of Popery, and to
aggravate the Conduct, and to blacken all the Steps
of our Reformers, leaving heavy Imputations both on
K. Edward and Q. Elizabeth, charging the last, as
having done more Mischiefe to our Church than her Si-
ster Queen Mary had done, softening even Tho. Becket's
Behaviour with this mild Censure, That his Conduct
was not altogether defensible.

But

But while I call upon you to be on your Guard against *Popery*, to study those Controversies, and to watch against the Practices of their Missionaries, as the most active, the best supported, and the most dangerous of all our Enemies; I must likewise in the most solemn manner, and with all the Authority that belongs to the Character I bear, charge you to study to maintain the Foundation of all the Belief of the Christian Religion, against the prophane Tribe of those who call themselves *Free Thinkers*: We have many noble Apologies set out for the Truth of our Religion, which you ought to carry ever in your Thoughts, that so you may be well prepared and furnished when you meet with any of those Libertines. But to those excellent Writings, in which the *Boilean* Lecture furnishes us with new ones every Year, let us all take care to add one Argument, which is the peculiar Glory of the Primitive Apologies. Let us study to live so, that we may appeal to the Lives of Christians for the Truth of their Religion.

For the Mysteries of it, let us maintain those in the Simplicity in which the Scriptures have delivered them to us; being neither beaten out of them by the vain Attempts of Philosophy, nor the false Subtilties of Criticism, nor carried into pretended Explanations of what we must confess is above and beyond our Reach: Receiving what God is pleased to reveal to us, and believing it in the natural and plain Sense that the Words must bear, because it comes from Men Authorised in the Name of God to deliver it to us; and let us avoid all Contention and needless Curiosities in those Matters.

Those who divide from us in Worship, ought not to be forgot by us; we ought to infuse in them a deep Sense of their Obligations, to maintain an Union with the Body, as long as the Body is united to the Head: and that therefore nothing can excuse the rending the Body, but the being forced to do something that separates us from Christ, I mean some unlawful Things.

Thing. This is the only Measure that can be set, to the Duty of living in Communion with the Body of the Christians, among whom we are mixed: And as this Duty does certainly lie close to us, so the ill Effects of many Men's departing from it are so eminent and visible, that we ought to use our best Endeavours to overcome the Prejudices, and answer the Objections of those who divide from us. In which we may hope to succeed, if we do not spoil a good Cause in the Management: Shewing no Uneasiness at the Favour they have by the Law, not envying the Liberty given them, nor watching Occasions to deprive them of it: We do not know how soon such Things may come to our own Door, and not mixing Wrath or Railing with Argument, but in *meekness instructing those that oppose themselves*, (or as the Word is) those that form themselves in an Opposition to us, not being overcome of Evil, but overcoming Evil with Good.

Therefore watch and remember, that for the space of three Years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with Tears.

Ver. 31.

After St. Paul had given them Warning of what they were to look for, both from without and from among themselves, he charged them thus, they ought to watch, to guard against, and to prevent all the Beginnings of Evil; the Importance of this is, That they ought to be quiet in their Station, to avoid the giving any just Offence to those among whom, and under whom they lived; to be so cautious and prudent, as well as innocent, that by no rash or ill Conduct of theirs, they might give Advantages to those who would be careful to observe and to improve them. Persecution, whenever it comes, will be heavy enough, and will not want so great an Aggravation as this, that we have drawn it upon ourselves. They are also charged to watch against all the Beginnings of Errours, and Rents among them; to try, if Differences should happen to arise, how they might be composed before they broke out into a Flame; Leaving to all Men a just Freedom in such Matters as are not the Foundation of our Faith, or necessary Truths: Imposing nothing beyond what is revealed,

or what is conducing to advance the great Ends of Order, Charity, and Edification : Judging as charitably as we can of those who differ from us, as we find St. Paul and the other Apostles did in the great and most important Controversie of that Age, concerning the *Mosaical* Observances.

To this St. Paul adds Words in which we may see a lasting Pattern for us to copy after. He bids them *remember that for the Space of three Years he ceased not to warn every one Night and Day with Tears.* This was a large Portion of his Time that he had bestowed on this Church or this Province. He made the Conducting them his Work, in which he continued unwearied, plying them at all Times, and that with a warm and affectionate Tenderness that appeared both in his Labours, and in his Tears.

Let us reflect on this, and bring it home to our own Hearts : Are we instant in our Duty ? Does it lie on us, and melt us down into Compassion for the Souls of our People ? Do we follow them in the prudentest Manner we can, to see if we can rescue them out of any Snare in which they may be caught ? Do we pray for a Blessing on our Endeavours ? Do we mourn over the Sins of our People before God, and wrestle with him in our most earnest Intercessions for them ? Happy we ! if, when we look back on the Course of our Labours for many Years, we find this Comfort in our Minds that we have in a sincere, though low Degree, followed this Great Apostle ; and made Conscience of discharging the Trust committed to us. Oh ! what Matter of Shame and Humiliation must we find in our selves, when we look back and see how formal and superficial, how cold, or luke-warm at best, if not quite negligent and remiss, we have been in our Duty. If we do not see Cause to charge our selves with great Commissions ; yet Oh ! what a Load of Omissions will we feel pressing us down to the Ground : If we measure our Duty from what is here set before us, and compare it with our very defective Practice ? For this I desire to humble my self, and call
on

on you all to joyn with me in a deep Humiliation before God: And Oh! that we may be awakened to redeem the Time, for certainly *the Days are evil.*

I have now led you in a Thread of Meditations through all St. Paul's last Farewell, till I have brought you to the Words of my Text, on which having enlarged so much in my Sermon I will add nothing further on them.

I have coveted no Man's Gold, or Silver, or Apparel, yea Ver. 33, 34, 35.
your selves know that these Hands have ministered unto my Necessities, and to them that were with me.

I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the Weak.

St. Paul affirms he had coveted none of their Wealth: He would not make the Gospel chargeable to young Beginners, nor furnish them with Prejudices against him on that Account. As he had done among the *Corinthians*, so also among the *Ephesians* he avoided the being chargeable to any of them. He was contented with a bare Supply of Necessity; indulging neither Vanity, nor Luxury; and though he had a Right to demand this of them, yet he chose rather in the Intervals of his spiritual Labours, to apply himself to such bodily Labour as might procure to him, and to those who went along with him, that which might answer the Demands of Nature, which are easily satisfied. If by the Providence of God we should be driven to a State of Persecution, we see in this how we ought to govern our selves. There are few things that look worse in Clergymen, give a worse Character of them, and defeat their Labours more effectually than sordid or griping Covetousness: The very Appearances of it ought to be carefully avoided.

It is true where Christian Kingdoms and States have set off Provisions for those who labour in this Work, they may very lawfully take, and even demand it. For this they owe their Thanks only to God, and to the Legislators: And certainly it is a much wiser
Way

Way to assert our Right on the Bottom of Law, which here cannot be disputed, than to run into a remoter and more doubtful Argument of the *Divine Right of Tythes*: In this we are sure we have both Law and Justice on our Side. Where the Provision is too narrow, as alas it is in many Places, there the honest Industry of a Clergyman has a Warrant from St. Paul's Practice, as he was in all things an Example to us, chiefly in *supporting the Weak, and relieving the Poor*, for which he quotes a Word of our blessed Saviour's, that lived in the Memory of his Disciples, though it is not recorded in the Gospels. *It is more blessed to give than to receive*, the one makes us liker God: But as the Charity of the Rich in giving; and the Humility of the Poor in receiving Alms, are both acceptable to God, so in these Cases God accepts the Will for the Deed: He who has a bountiful Heart, and but a narrow Fortune, is accepted of God, not according to what he can give, but according to what he would give if his Plenty were as great as his Charity.

I have now gone over this *Noble Speech* with you, my Brethren, as I often do it by my self. I know no Part of the Writings of the Apostles more useful and instructing, both to awaken in us the Sense of our Duty, and to lead us to just Reflections on what is pass'd, and to the comfortable Prospect of what may be before us.

God grant that You and I, and all of us, may so enter into our own Consciences, and so carefully attend to these Words, that they may *abide in us*, and we may *abide in them*, following the Pattern here set before us: And that both You and I may do this, I commend you Brethren to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them that are sanctified: To this I commend my self, as well as You all. A M E N.

F I N I S.